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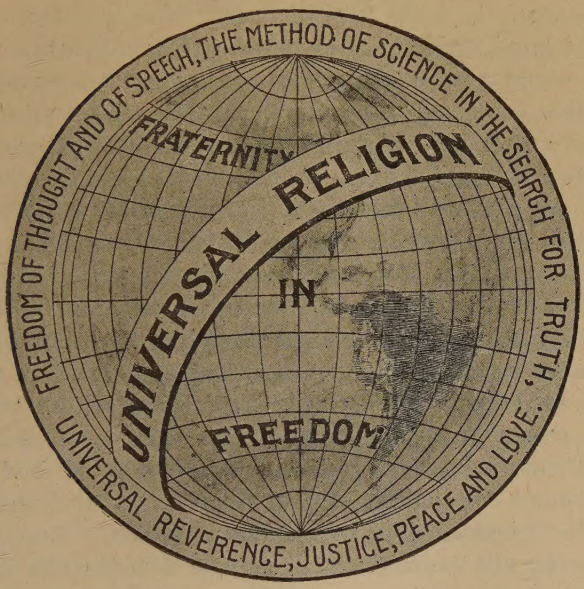

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Tenth Anniversary Fund.

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WHAT LIFE IS FOR.*

BY ALFRED W. MARTIN.

The great majority of mankind, I fancy, if asked what life is for, would answer—happiness. Surely 'tis no exaggeration to say that most men and women start out in life bent on achieving their own individual happiness. And by happiness they usually mean the gratification of immediate or prospective desire, getting out of life all there is in it of enjoyment and ease, reaching out to catch the rich clusters of delight that hang from the tree of opportunity. Whatever the particular type of happiness be to which they aspire it seems to be ever attainable and therefore it is constantly pursued. What though it turn out to be, like Juno in the ancient myth, a cold and clammy cloud in their embrace; this happiness, they believe, is still worth pursuing, and so they renew the mad chase again and again, many going down to their graves fondly imagining that if they had had but one chance more, the happiness that so often escaped their grasp would have become their permanent possession. But this is altogether an idle expectation, a pathetic delusion, for happiness is not a tangible entity, not a substance that can be put under lock and key, but rather something that invariably eludes its pursuer. Happiness is one of those exquisite surprises that come to us when we have not thought of them. To get it we must forget it. No modern writer has vindicated the truth of this contention more forcibly and finely than Germany's greatest dramatist and poet. Goethe took as the central thought of his two grandest works this very doctrine of happiness as something never secured by deliberate and direct pursuit. He took a single human type, an ordinary, average young man, and told the story of his experience, showing that if happiness be what life is for then it won't do to chase after it—to be gotten it must

*A New Year discourse spoken before the Tacoma and Seattle Societies for Universal Religion.

be forgotten, it can come only indirectly, incidentally, unsought, as a surprise-sequel to the work in which we are engaged. He demonstrates by this typical case that a vacant life, serviceless and unconsecrated, is the worst of all pains, while a life of unselfish service dedicated to a worthy end makes a setting in which the lustrous jewel happiness will shine as nowhere else. Recall for a moment the career of Wilhelm Meister, the hero of Goethe's story; a young man who starts out in life as most young men are apt to start, a thorough-going, full-fledged eudemonist, that is, one bent on achieving his own individual happiness. By his utter selfishness and sheer thoughtlessness he makes all manner of mistakes, commits the most woeful blunders, sacrifices everybody and everything to the fulfillment of his own selfish ends, heedlessly gratifies his every desire and at length reaps the inevitable result. The pursuit of happiness, as he had understood it, far from bringing him what he sought, involves him in a succession of trials and misfortunes from which he extricates himself only with increasing difficulty. He pays heavily for his indulgence and indifference. Sickness and disease lay hold on him and he is made to suffer in strict accordance with the law of moral retribution. Thus there dawns on him the conviction that happiness is to be found not in self-gratification, but in self-development, and so he changes his mode of life, his tastes, habits, activities. He sets out in search of culture, intellectual and æsthetic, culture of mind and of manners. But while this new object of pursuit is nobler by far than the first, it is far from yielding him the happiness he seeks. As he comes in contact with the educated, scholarly men in the community, he discovers how little learning he has in comparison with them, finds himself a mere bourgeois in their company, and as a consequence becomes disheartened and discouraged over the failure of culture to bring him the coveted happiness. Nevertheless his reading and intercourse have not been in vain. They have refined his tastes and, what is more, led him to subordinate the search for his own happiness to the interesting of himself in others' welfare. He takes up the study of medicine and in the practice of his profession, healing the sick, alleviating pain and removing disease, he finds a satisfaction and contentment such as he had

never experienced before. In other words, when he has abandoned the direct pursuit of happiness, then, and then only, happiness came to him.

Exactly the same doctrine is taught and with still greater force in *Faust.* Mephistopheles agrees to furnish Faust with absolute bliss on condition that he surrender his soul to the tempter forever when the moment arrives on which Faust shall exclaim "Stay, thou art fair." Mephistopheles begins by beguiling the youth with a variety of sensual delights, but they all fail of their purpose, for remorse follows indulgence and an exact equivalent in misery is felt for every degree of broken law. Then comes the awakening of Faust, his initiation into the affairs of statesmanship and his devotion to intellectual pursuits, symbolized by the flight to Greece and the discussions with phantoms of Hellenic and Egyptian mythology. He goes through precisely the same discipline as Wilhelm Meister, turns gradually from outright pleasure-seeking to purely disinterested activity and finds happiness in the very hour when all thought of it has been forgotten. He conceives a plan to drain a large tract of miasmatic land and fit it for the habitation of future generations. In contemplating the successful fulfillment of his plan he takes exceeding great delight, and one day, old and infirm, he looks out from his tower upon the marshy waste and reflects upon the inestimable blessing his work will be to the thousands yet unborn. This is the moment of unalloyed bliss. "Stay, thou art fair," he cries, and falls back dead, not, however, into the hands of Mephistopheles, but into the arms of the heavenly hosts who translate him in triumph to the skies.

It was at the close of the eighteenth century that these master-pieces of moral instruction were written, but the doctrine of happiness they set forth has lost none of its timeliness during the intervening decades. On the contrary, it is a doctrine that we need to rehearse and reassimilate today more than ever. For I take it that one of the deepest needs of our age is to grasp and fix this theory of happiness, to develop the social consciousness, to govern personal life by a philosophy that has others, and not self, for its corner stone; to make men feel, as Wilhelm Meister and Faust were made to feel, that life is not worth living save as

we contribute something of worth to the evolution of the race, that it profiteth us nothing if having acquired social position, luxuries, wealth, we yet lack character and consecration, that the proudest distinction a human soul can crave is to be, in some small measure at least, a savior of the race. What is most needed in our times is not so much the multiplication of systems and institutions as the consecration of individual men and women, not, as someone has aptly said, not a new gospel, but the gospel anew, the gospel of personal service, of consecrated action, of unselfish love, the gospel that has been taught by every religion from oldest time and on farthest shore. It sings in the noble hymns of the Vedas, it whispers in the fervent prayers of the Avesta, Buddha brought it to the distracted inhabitants of India, Confucius carried it to the congressional assemblies in China, Mohammed made it the subject of his meditation in the Arabian desert, Jesus preached it on the shores of Galilee, Paul proclaimed it in Rome and Asia Minor, Dante sang it in the cantos of the Commedia, Savonarola thundered it from the Duomo pulpit of the throng of bewildered Florentines—the gospel of self-development and self-devotion, of balanced egoism and altruism, of character and service as the gateway to the happiness that life is for.

Surely, then, it is well for us at the beginning of another year to pause and ask what is our life for? Are we like the majority, chasing after a happiness that can come only when all thought of it has been abandoned? Are we making progress in the upper zones of our being or are we, perchance, simply vegetating in the latitudes of ignoble content and selfish ease? Are we living down in the body or up in the soul? Old, familiar, commonplace questions these, you will say, yet we need to ask them again and again until the habit of looking on life with moral seriousness becomes a second nature of the soul. How apt we are to lapse into indifference concerning the steady cultivation of our nobler selves. How easily we fall into the pernicious practice of self-excuse as we see our aspirations still unconverted into achievements. How often and how readily we delude ourselves with the notion that spiritual progress is not worth its cost, that there are elevations of character which it were sheer foolishness for us to hope to reach, that unconquerable forces

must ever master us, until at last the spirit of pessimism so broods over our life as to close up the springs of enterprise and effort and we sink to the dust when we might have touched the stars. Well for us it is, then, that on the birthday of another year we fix our thoughts upon that most practical of all religious questions, What is life for?

Some one has said that culture is what life is for. True, but what is culture? Mr. John Bright defined it as knowledge of the ancient classics. Mr. Frederic Harrison says it is the mental equipment that fits one for criticizing new books. Matthew Arnold, again, makes culture consist in acquaintance with the best thought of the past. But there is, I take it, a culture different from all of these, deeper than them all, a culture that is not knowledge, nor criticism, nor any other form of intellectual power, but a culture in which character plays a much greater part than intellect, a culture whose root is purity, whose flower is an unselfish love and whose fruit the consecrated service of our fellowmen. To own that culture is at once the first lesson in morals and in wisdom; it is, moreover, a possibility for every child of man. There are no circumstances, no conditions, no situations that can make it impossible for a man or a woman to possess this priceless treasure.

Do you set up heredity and say that because of evil dispositions and proclivities inherited from a near or remote ancestry, you are incapacitated for owning this culture? I reply, with Galton, and many another authority to sustain my contention, that the most you can legitimately claim is that your evil inheritance makes it extremely difficult, but *not impossible* for you to master it and possess the supreme culture of the soul. Moreover, your conquest will be all the grander and worthier in proportion to the severity of the conflict. I appeal to the leading physiologists of our time, and to those who have made of physiological-psychology a specialty, in my claim that there are powers within us equal to the mighty task of subduing the seemingly fateful forces of heredity. One of our own women-poets has put the truth of the matter in thrilling verse and its significance is all the greater in that she herself knew from experience what the struggle against inheritance implies.

"There is no evil thing we cannot overcome.
Say not thy evil instinct is inherited,
Or that some trait inborn makes thy whole life forlorn,
And calls down punishment that is not merited.

Back of thy parents and grand-parents lies
The Great Eternal Will. That, too, is thine
Inheritance; strong, beautiful, divine,
Sure lever of success for one who tries.

Pry up thy faults with this great lever, Will,
However deeply bedded in propensity;
However firmly set, I tell thee firmer yet
Is that vast power that comes from Truth's immensity.

Earth has no claim the soul can not contest.
Know thyself part of that Eternal Source,
And naught can stand before thy spirit's force.
The soul's divine inheritance is best."

Do you say that you were born selfish, impatient, irritable, lazy, hot-tempered, cold-hearted and therefore you cannot be otherwise? I claim you *can* be and the first requisite is to feel that you *ought* to be and there is never any "ought" anywhere without a "can" to start with. "When duty whispers low 'thou must,' the youth replies 'I can.' "

Do you set up the plea of the old orthodox catechism which declares that man is weak and depraved and must have help from on high, that an external supernatural grace is his only source of salvation? I say there is a God-force in every child of man, and we dishonor our manhood and womanhood the moment we fall back on that old superstitious plea. The divine element within us forbids our ever falling back in ignominious complacency on our oars with the remark we have done the best we could. The assertion is false. No man ever did the best he could in one day or in all the days of his life put together. Shame upon us if we ever allow ourselves to think we have done the utmost possible. The Pharisee dared to think so as he stood on the temple steps parading his piety and virtue, but ever since, the world has looked with scorn and contempt upon that supercilious soul. Contrast him with the publican standing afar

off, smiting himself upon the breast and crying "God be merciful to me a sinner." Upon him the world will ever look with sympathy and pity, for he had climbed up into the heights of his nobler self and looked down with sorrow and a divine discontent upon what he was, knowing that through the God-force in his own soul he might have been more of a man.

Not only is the God-*force* given, but also the God-*way* is given. For there is a way of living here and now for you and for me, different indeed for each according to our different aptitudes, capacities, constitutions, but unalterably fixed for us all. And to find that way, and, having found it, to follow it, this is the supreme business of life for each human soul. To develop the real that you are into the ideal you ought to be is *the* problem of problems, and as long as we strive to copy another ideal instead of finding and realizing our own we are on the mistaken track and deterred from fulfilling our own true personal life.

And the sooner we find the God-way the better. Let every young man and young woman beware of the belief that it will be time enough to find that way when the period of youth has passed. Youth, they tell us, is the time for enjoyment, for ease and pleasure, for free surrender to the claims of sense. Yes, but it is also the time for character, for conviction, for self-consecration and surrender to the claims of conscience and heart. If, in the dawn of his manhood, a man has had no aspirations toward these higher ends of his being, it will be well-nigh impossible to have them when the noontide of his life has passed. If youth has been devoted chiefly to pleasure there will of necessity be an overissue of drafts on the bank of health and what a terrible depreciation of body and mind will be reported on 'change, on the street and in that most tearful place, the Home, when the morrow of manhood dawns. With its wonderful recuperative powers youth can do many things with apparent impunity, but in later life an irrepealable nemesis works itself out, as the biography of many a broken life testifies. It is in youth that most of those fatal steps are taken which lead to a weakened life and an early grave; it is in youth, too, that the yoke carelessly, flippantly assumed, in after years acquires a crushing deadening weight. Hence the paramount

importance of adopting that philosophy of life which makes youth the time for discipline in self-control as well as for indulgence in self-pleasing, for fixing and revering a worthy life-purpose as well as for feeding and fulfilling the desires of the flesh. Every young man and young woman as they set sail on the ocean of life should first call aboard the crew of their faculties, then spread the canvas of consecration to their life-purpose, next, steer out into the broad channel of opportunity, leaving a cargo of character and service at every port they touch and with no lesser aim than to belt the globe with their beneficent influence and power. Herein is happiness of the highest kind, the kind that life is for.

If now, in conclusion, we consider what man's place in the animal kingdom is we shall realize still more fully that life is for just these high and holy ends which I have indicated.

What, I would ask, are the attributes, the possessions of man that put him in a class apart from all the rest of the animal kingdom? I think we can point to at least four distinctive marks of man, four features of his nature that differentiate him absolutely from all other creatures. First, his power to distinguish between real and ideal, to recognize the ideal as that which he *ought to be* in contradistinction to what he is, and strive for its realization. Second, the sense of moral imperfection, of soul-incompleteness, which stimulates a divine discontent, the seed of all possible development and progress. Third, the consciousness of a Power to which he in some way stands related, a Power other than himself, higher than he, a relationship that implies obligations which cannot be honorably ignored. Fourth, the sublime belief that death is not an exit into blank annihilation, but an entrance into a non-corporeal continuance of the soul-life here on earth. These four I regard as essentially distinctive possessions of man and consequently *they* determine what *human* life is for, precisely as the peculiar characteristics or possibilities of a horse or an engine would decide what its life is for. What, then, must the life of a *man* be for; the life of a moral being perceiving moral perfection and capable of striving for its attainment, the life of a child of God, the life of an immortal being mapping out its course on an eternal plan

as having nothing less than infinite and everlasting significance, what is such a life for? Clearly it must be for the purest, noblest, grandest, divinest yet simplest ends; divine pity, sympathy, tenderness, devotion, helpfulness, consecrated unselfish love; and we grow more and more Godlike the more we make the possession of these divine qualities the master-passion of our lives.

What, O woman, is your life for, you who are bowed down with cares and sorrows known only to your own heart? And yours, O man, you who are fretted and chafed by worries and anxieties, by hardship and loss? And, again, what is your life for, all ye who struggle along the uneven pathway of your course, bearing up under the strain of adversity, misunderstanding, disappointment and grinding toil; oh take, I beseech you, a fresh draught from the cup of consecration to these eternal realities that life is for, dedicate yourselves anew to divine tenderness, divine sympathy, divinely-helpful love and a heavenly happiness will descend upon you and bless you forever.

REVELATION.

BY JAMES H. WEST.

What hast thou heard, O soul, with inward ear,
That makes all written Word to thee seem naught? . . .
Upon the Shore Eternal I have caught
The rythmic murmur: One are There and Here,
And life and death alike are void of fear.
The Power that out of lowliness hath brought
The rose to beauty, and man's spirit fraught
With godlike aims, still pulsates every sphere!

We live, we love,—we vanish. Still we are,
And in eternal round we live and grow,
And love again, and rise to more and more.
O ye who suffer! all your grief unbar!
Ye suffer only while ye hug your woe.
No tempest shatters on this deeper shore.

COUNTER-COMMENT ON THE MEMORABLE PETITION.

One of the most devoted friends of our cause and a philosophical thinker of the first rank, writes us from New England as follows:

"Yes, I received the 'Story of a Memorable Petition,' and it does show, what is plain to all outsiders, that Unitarian professions of freedom, fellowship and universality in religion are hollow enough, because they hold good only up to the limits of the 'religion of Jesus.' Yet I am at heart glad that the makers of the Year Book refused your petition, for the refusal saved your Free Church from being put in a false position. I dislike all entangling alliances. If your Free Church were adopted by the Unitarian denomination sufficiently to be enrolled in their denominational register, no matter with what explanatory subheading, and above all at your own request, you would be powerless to make good your claim of being wholly disconnected with Unitarianism. If the present A. U. A. leaders were shrewd enough to grant your request, and then argue that their 'religion of Jesus.' Would not that be a case of the spider and the fly? Church as in substantial unity with itself, you could not claim that your universal religion was any broader than the 'religion of Jesus.' Would not that be a case o fthe spider and the fly? I am myself thankful that the shrewdness of Rev. S. A. Eliot, D. D., president of the American Unitarian Association, is not great enough to spike your guns in that bland way! So long as he refuses your request, you are safe enough, but it would be death to the Free Church to grant it."

[Without wishing to be at all controversial we would say to our esteemed correspondent that we take no special pride in the claim of being "wholly disconnected with Unitarianism." We were once Unitarian and with sorrow accepted the inevitable consequences of consistency. When we, as a society, voted to stand for free and universal religion instead of for the "religion of Jesus" (which is only *in part* acceptable to us) there was nothing for us to do but to withdraw from a fellowship which virtually excluded us by standing for something narrower than free and universal religion. But with Mr. Dole we confidently anticipate the time when the Unitarian body will be broad enough to fellowship all Free Churches. We recognize the fact that there are many Unitarians who care not a whit for their

National Constitution, who wear the name regardless of its official connotations and who are in actual sympathy with the movement we represent. We recognize the fact that there is much in common between the Unitarianism of the "left-wing" and our own non-sectarian cause. Why not, then, seek to promote the interests of religious fellowship, so far as we honorably and consistently can, by the enrollment of the names of all Free Churches and their ministers in a separate and clearly differentiating category in the Unitarian Year-Book, especially when it would there have an additional title to express in the fact of its broadened fellowship? There is nothing in isolation or independence that makes it desirable for its own sake. Independence means weakness and is commendable and inevitable only when principles are at stake. Better alone with loyalty to our ideal, than association with all the world and our ideal dragging in the dust.

We need have no fear of being taken for Unitarians. On the contrary, let the list of Free Churches and their ministers be published in the manner indicated by Mr. Dole's petition and not only will it bring into clearer light the real issue that separates the new movement from the old, but what is more, a decided step will be taken toward the realization of religion's noblest ideal—a universal spiritual fellowship, not of *systems*, but of *free souls*, united on the sublime basis of fraternity in freedom.—Ed.]

EDITORIAL.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.

Our attention was recently drawn to the delivery of certain "broad and non-sectarian" sermons from Unitarian pulpits. One of these had for its theme "the church of the living God." The preacher outlined an organization nobly catholic in spirit, grandly inclusive in fellowship, uncompromisingly scientific and progressive in intellectual basis and outlook, reverent and worshipful in attitude to all the deep things of the spirit. A more adequate presentation of the principles and ideals of the new movement in religion could hardly be imagined. But it came from a pulpit that represents a sect of Christianity and ther-

fore something narrower and less inclusive than the movement described. There was an obvious inconsistency. The preacher's church did not correspond to "The church of the living God," nor was there any hint of lifting it out of its sectarian position to the higher, broader plane of universal religion. The grand ideas for which he stood that Sunday morning were compromised by his practical connections. The congregation was enthusiastic over the discourse, complimented the minister on his excellent statement of the religious ideal, but took no steps toward squaring their church with that ideal. Actions speak louder than words. It did not occur to them that there was any need of action to make the discourse and their enthusiasm *count* for something. Probably they felt that their church already represented the new ideal and called for no readjustment or reorganization. Yet it is only by doing violence to language, only by violating the ethics of the intellect that one can make any Christian denomination represent what universal religion stands for.

Another instance of a similar sort to which our notice was attracted, concerned the discourse of a Jewish rabbi on "the religion of Democracy." From the pulpit of his synagogue he gave utterance to ideas and sentiments that directly contradicted his position as a representative of Judaism, even though of the "reformed" type. For it is still Judaism, one of the world's great sects, something *less* than his "religion of Democracy" that the rabbi represents and was hired to represent. He may preach the broader, more catholic, inclusive, democratic religion from the rostrum till doomsday, but not until he steps down and out and on to the platform of a temple of the religion of Democracy will his gospel have significance and weight. Actions speak louder than words. The man is compromising his own magnificent ideal by his actual sectarian connection. What can his gospel signify to his people, remaining as they do within the boundaries of Judaism? As long as the rabbi's thought is not externalized and embodied in an organization that befits it, he fails to serve it in the most helpful way. His position is like that of the man who *talked* free trade but *voted* protection. Just to the extent that one compromises one's cause by one's practical

affiliations is the cause hindered and the public mind confused. Far be it from us to cast the slightest reflection upon the intellectual honesty of those who preach the new religion from the old pulpits. Our sole contention is that actions speak louder than words, that a man ought not to compromise the ideas for which he stands by his practical connections, that the cause of universal religion, the religion of Democracy, is genuinely helped and furthered only when consistently externalized in an organization that corresponds to the pulpit's description of it.

IN MEMORIAM.

In the death of Mr. G. W. Plummer, Mrs. I. Sternberg and Miss Hortense Shenkenberg, the First Free Church has lost three of its most loyal and earnest members. Mr. Plummer will always be remembered for his kindly spirit and the zealous work, which in quiet unobtrusive ways he accomplished, to spread the gospel of free and universal religion.

Mrs. Sternberg exemplified to an unusual degree the familiar motto "noblesse oblige." She had decided gifts as a reciter and was ever ready to give freely of her talent, feeling that the nobility of power obliges the possessor to render service with it, both without pecuniary compensation as well as for it.

Miss Shenkenberg's death was singularly sad, cut off as she was in the bloom of youth and with every prospect of a worthy career. Her services in the Sunday school can never be forgotten. Both by example and precept she exerted an influence on the lives of twenty or more little girls which is certain to count in the formation of their character and thus immortalize their teacher in themselves. Appropriate resolutions were drawn up by the members of her class (and also by those of her brother's class, a lad of fourteen, who also fell a victim of malignant dephtheria only a week before his sister) and a copy sent to her sorrowing parents.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY FUND.

The plan instituted by Mr. Martin last April to raise $3,000 toward the liquidation of the mortgage on the church property has met with remarkable success. Every member of the society residing in Tacoma has been visited by Mr. Martin and the plan laid before each one in detail. Besides the subscriptions secured from this source, and a dozen from Seattle, there have been received to date from various sources the following:

Lectures delivered in the east by Mr. Martin and arranged for by Miss J. W. Frothingham	$525.00
Mrs. Frank Green, Boston, Mass	50.00
Dr. Charles Martin, Montreal, Canada	50.00
Allen C. Mason, Helena, Mont	50.00
John C. Haynes, Boston, Mass	25.00
Mrs. A. P. Tapley, Boston, Mass	25.00
Miss J. W. Frothingham, Boston, Mass	25.00
Miss Ireson, Lynn, Mass	25.00
Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Boston, Mass	10.00
Mrs. E. D. Cheney, Boston, Mass	10.00
E. A. Filene, Boston, Mass	10.00
T. G. Milsted, New York, N. Y	10.00
Alexander Falconer, Montreal, Canada	10.00
Mrs. Wm. Rotch, New Bedford, Mass	10.00
G. Martin, Boston, Mass	10.00
Mrs. T. E. Ripley, Boston, Mass	10.00
E. B. Foote, Jr., M. D., New York, N. Y	10.00
J. A. Higginson, Boston, Mass	5.00
Total received to October 30th	$870.00

In the December issue the total receipts from all sources, at home and abroad, will be reported.

FAITH BUILT ON REASON

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In the form of question and answer.

By F. L. ABBOT.

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